Robert Lamplam: Have you read some things. I noticed you have some focused issues there.

Robert Korstad: Yeah, I've read a little bit of that. I haven't read a lot on this. I've been reading so much on so many other things that I haven't. I've started getting some of the publications, and I'm going to go downstairs right now.

RL: There is a short history of the Institute.
RK: I don't have that. I need to get that.
RL: How it started and what it's main features have been. I'm perfectly stumped here on how to start. [Laughter] If we start with the Institute and how it came into being, maybe that's advisable beginning, and then we can turn off in different directions. The Institute grew out of President Johnson's War on Poverty idea, which in turn grew out of, I think, the Council of Economic Advisors. Where I happened to be, a staff member, during this time. This was, in retrospect, certainly a time of great confidence that we learned how to manage poverty and prevent it, prevent the big depressions and the great inflations and achieve stability and growth and national goals of a related nature. It was, in retrospect, a period of over confidence [laughter], a simplification perhaps of problems and the difficulties ahead. In that spirit, President Johnson picked up on an idea that Kennedy had kicked around a while, which was that we should do something about poverty in the United States at a national level. There were two big strands of thought that developed within the presidential circle at about that time, after the announcement of the War on Poverty. I think it was 1968, or at least after the beginning of thinking about it in the presidential circle. One was what I would call economics ideas. Some of us thought that poverty was best attacked by achieving high employment and maintaining it, which was the Keynesian goal, I guess you could say, and also, of improving the productivity of low income workers by such things as training, retraining, relocating people, cutting back on discrimination, unemployment, and so on. A whole bunch of labor market measures, coupled with investment, you might say, in human beings. The other part of the economics program would be to take hold of various social transfers or social welfare programs and expand them to include the poor. The theory was Michael Harrington's theory, or the observation, insight, was that a lot of the social welfare programs of the 1930's failed to really include the poor. The best example would be the unemployment compensation. It was a good idea but it didn't (                   )

RK: In the South I know, for instance, domestic and agricultural workers were excluded.

RL: In most states you have to have a very strong and stable connection with the labor force, in advance of being eligible for any kind of life insurance benefits. So that's just a little bit of the story of what I call the economic side. The other side, which turned out to be a very powerful message, was, I guess I'd call it, a sociological side. That was involving organization of the poor, community action, voting rights, a whole set of rights of individuals and of low income communities
and centers and occupations and so on. It was a group effort. It was based on an idea that poverty was due to weakness in groups, and if you could change the procedures and the processes of a political and social nature, then people could work their way out of poverty. So this was captioned under this broad heading of community action. That became a big part of the Economic Opportunity Act. Now, the Poverty Institute came mostly out of this first thing, I think. That is, the economic approach, but it had to live with, at least, it had to try to understand and include the community action approach.

RK: Was there an intellectual center to the sociological approach comparable to this? That I haven't....

RL: Well, I think there have been a number. The Ford Foundation was, of course, the originator through its, what was it called?

RK: Gray Areas Projects.

RL: Yeah, Gray Areas. Michael Smirinoff was the guru of that, and he continues, even now, as a center in himself.

RK: Yeah, [laughter] he has his own little thing.

RL: But it sprung up around the country in various ways, in various forms. For example, the reorganization of welfare, what was the name? Whit Lee was in command.

RK: Yeah, the National Welfare Rights Organization.

RL: (                ) mainly in Chicago, I think. And then this other man down there in Chicago....

RK: Alinsky or somebody like that.

RL: Yeah, Sol Alinsky.

RK: I have a biography of him I should read.

RL: Yeah, and of course, the story of a lot of this is told in Pat Moydihan's little book about maximum feasible participation. (                )

RK: (                )

RL: Yeah, well, he focuses particularly on Harlem and some of the other earlier efforts. These were not really easily reconciled, these two approaches. Social science, you might say, was kind of split apart having different views. Economists seemed to fall easily into this first pattern. It wasn't hard for economists to understand and to show some enthusiasm for and about it, and some sociologist, particularly demographers and other descriptive workers. And then we had people who had studied a lot about educational opportunities (    ) which there's a class element involved in just thinking about poverty. So there were a lot of things that were a lot of things that were easy to reconcile among the social sciences. I think political science, number one, agricultural economics, and rural sociology.

RK: You brought a lot of different people like that together.

RL: So a lot of those things happened real easy, but the thing that didn't work out very well, in terms of experimentation or in terms of study, was the community action thing. The argument was that you had to get some kind of new political organization going. Had to break down the city machines and had to break down the school establishments. So it was a kind of
very confrontational sort of thing. I think there it was even open confrontation with the disciplines, with the established social science studies. The easy connection between the university and the power centers, that's also very much, of course, shown in agriculture where agricultural economic departments tended to work for the commercial farmers. They really didn't have anything to do with the.

RK: Small farmers?
RL: Self-subsisting farmers, tenants [laughter], migrant agricultural workers and so on. So that kind of confrontation reached out into the universities and had meaning, had some bite to it. But it was not the sort of thing that was easy to incorporate within the same institutions, like a research institute. Now, that continues even today, these very different procedures, very different types of analysis, and one notion is you have to be a participate observer, and that goes with this community action sort of thing. What does the intellectual do? What does Sol Alinsky do with these things? Well, he's there, and he catches up whatever it is that people are interested in. Carries the flag with them. So there's some people now who believe still that that's the real way for social scientists or social problem solvers, whatever you want to call us, should be.

RK: I guess social workers and anthropologists and people like that would be more in that, you would find their terms of discipline deferentiation?
RL: That's possible. Although, I think, social work, for one, is strongly split of this also. I'm just sort of stumbling around here, trying to get a start with you.
RK: This is very helpful actually.
RL: It is interesting to recall that back in the '60s, the social studies had drawn away from considering poverty as an issue or as a researchable subject almost. And a number of these groups that we referred to had dropped it out of their viewpoint. You could say that that was true about social work. That ( ) the social workers that we trained at the University of Wisconsin, for example, never worked in a public agency for poor people. They worked with the rich. They worked with people who had problems, but they weren't necessarily poor. And the people who came to them very often weren't the poor. So that they were moving along with the psychiatrists into that sort of work, individual clients with very intense problems. But they were unlikely to be the real poor, and they were certainly not the big slum areas. They didn't locate in those slums [laughter]. So you could argue, as Michael Harrington, I think, did and others, that social workers were out of touch. They had become a privatized counseling service. Well, that's harsh language. So you could say that that was an observation that had some truth in it, and that applied to numerous groups, perhaps including educators even and others, we just kind of closed our eyes to some difficult problem areas in our country. And poverty was a word that somehow fit or aroused interest or guilt or something [laughter].
RK: Or a combination of all three.
RL: Going back a little further, of course we had lots of things that didn't go under the word poverty. A number of them were regional in nature, like depressed areas was a word and a concept. The belief that poverty was essentially a matter of pockets in the country, West Virginia. You've got poverty in the Dust Bowl and so on. That you had these unique kinds of aberrations. There was some experience with these sorts of things, already by 1964, that had been shown to not work very well. One example, we set up this depressed area program. I say we, it was the ( ) administration. In the hands of Congress, this move from being a program for just a few very depressed centers, rural and urban both. ( ) there was something for everybody, every Congressional district that is [laughter]. Reaches everybody. Well, that's how the politics works. It's logrolling, or you trade this for that. The same thing happened with Appalachia redistricting. New York state got a big chunk of that money. It wasn't a poor state, and it wasn't in a very poor region, but it was Appalachia. So you got this kind of business. You start off something, and you learn that Congress and the president even, they're going to all go with. . . .

RK: That's another interesting thing that we're looking at is just how the political process helps or interferes with actually the way in which social sciences and problem solvers are trying to deal with these problems. Even if you look at grassroots initiatives and the way those, by the time they get through Congress and then get back down to people, how distorted those are, you're saying, to some extent, the same thing is true of the work economists and some of these advisers are doing in actually putting these plans together. Well, that's an important distinction.

RL: So I guess you could say that in the designing of the War on Poverty some of this experience was in mind for people. And the word poverty stuck, I think, because that was a word that was root enough, and you couldn't say, as we had done earlier, that it was depressed and therefore we had to do something about it, and give all the money to the rich, rather than the poor, in those districts. That's the way a lot of agricultural programs worked. The great problem of the Oklahoma Dust Bowl [laughter], give all the money to the rich guys.

RK: Mississippi, that was what happened.

RL: So anyway, this was very much what a lot of people. . . . And the word poverty as a test, goes to individual persons, not to areas. There's a big effort there to avoid the geographic. You didn't have to be a southern poor person. You weren't going to pay out the money on the basis on poverty rates or something like that. You were going to pay it to the people, to the individual persons, to the individual families. Well, that was the idea [laughter], but it doesn't always work out. You get various kinds of programs that are called antipoverty programs that have this old flavor to them of being regional or state by state, city by city, school district by school district and so on, and community by community. This area program idea comes back, every once a while with a great flourish. The most recent one is all this stuff about under-class, the urban
under-class, that area. You're talking about an area as an under-class, not the people are under-class. That's geographic, and you count the number of people in each census trace, and you say this is the target. This target is there because you've got a bunch of lower class people, but not everybody in there is that, and so on. That's your enterprise zones ( ) So that's been a big struggle all along as to whether the concept ( ) looking at the target. It's a region or a state or a family or individual. It's interesting that some social scientists are trained in one direction, and some, another. And I think many times, let's say city planners or urban problems people, they tend to think in semi-political regions. It's a process, and the process has its unit. I can understand that. Gives you a very new twist on it.

RK: Economists are much more interested in individual behavior, or some, I mean, they're both. They're interested in both.

RL: Yeah. I think economics goes back in its founding, Adam Smith, to individualist behavior and how far they can go in solving their own problems with a free market setting. What Adam Smith saw as progress was breaking down a lot of these barriers, walls around cities, guilds around occupations, all the security blankets. Get rid of those. Have just one big nation as a free market, or even better, a world. That's were the individual can roam free. Well, that's still a very radical look at the world, but that's sort of where economists start. You get this, I suppose, very profound argument that goes on about what causes what and what remedies will work for what. Sometimes I think that sociologists are not in that same frame.

RK: More in terms of groups?

RL: They think more along the lines of how did we get these groups, yeah, how did we get these classes, and then what power these classes have? And they generally ( ) that there is a great stability in society, that there's some function, some functional reality here. We have to live with it. You're never going to change it, and so when they come up against, of course, educational opportunity questions, they'll show you that the children from non-educated parents are unlikely to go to school or to go to college or whatever. And that's just reality [laughter]. As I've sometimes asked these people who are close colleagues here, Bill Sewell, and so on, how could you change that. "Darn, if I know." [Laughter] Do you break the families up, take the kids away? But they haven't really seriously thought about it. That's not their business. They show this profound, causal connection between education of mother, or whatever it is, education of children and their grand children. So they like to study all that endlessly. So when we meet in the Institute about, well, what are you going do? If you've got a hundred billion dollars, what are you going to spend it on? Well, they don't like to think that way. So they aren't really trained to be advisors to an action program. Now, you could say economists aren't either, in a way. A lot of laisser-faire trained economists, their main occupation is showing that most government programs can't work. They are counter productive. So
what is the right kind of (        ) Political scientists are often only interested in these governmental processes. Give people the right to vote or get them into a new redistricting or something. Move things from the state to the federal level, or from the federal down to the local level, or revise the local level. Those are political kinds of things.

RK: Yeah, move things around.

RL: Move things around. Change the process. Then they may never study whether it actually changes the poverty incidence in the country. They're just interested in seeing if you can change the process. Will it be popular? Will it work? Will it have surviving power? So political scientists have one kind of view, but sociologists quite a different one, and economists. In general, it seems economists have been more successful in getting an audience with the federal government, at least, I don't know about local and state so much, but the federal government, both with Republicans and Democrats. (     ) a great deal. I have argued what the main significance of the War on Poverty was was that it moved responsibility to the federal level for a lot of programs that had been either local or state responsibilities. (     ) a main thing that Johnson did was say this is a national problem, and we have to deal with nationally. We can't deal with it any other way or exclusively.

RK: Is that good or bad, you think?

RL: Well, that's a big . . .

RK: Still a big question, yeah.

RL: It's been argued strongly. And of course, this man who died last month, Richard (      ), (      ) the system. This War on Poverty was clearly [laughter] a part of (    ) the system, centralized. Make a bigger and bigger central government all the time. It's going to lead to (      ). And again, as you may remember what (     ) said. These problems have ways of growing and (             ). You get corruption. You get all sorts of bad things. Then that means you have to have a stronger central government, and you finally get the tougher guys running this stronger program. And these tougher guys take you all the way to Hilter. That's one evaluation, you could say. What this was was just part of a long process of centralizing power, in not only the national government but in government. And that meant less for free choices for individuals or private groups. So you get that kind of (         ). (       ) you said, "Is that a good thing?" (     ) One of the things that is involved in this is if you see the problem nationally, you think of different kinds of remedies. If you look at West Virginia, gully, a single one, what can you do for that? It's not clear yet, too many options that are (      ). You think nationally, why don't we take these people out of here and move them to Detroit or wherever [laughter]. So you at least start thinking of some different things. I remember when Michael Harrington was here, talking about (      ) last times, after he'd written that book. He was complaining about all the depression in New England. (      ) the glue industry and the textile industry and all moving out to Carolina and Georgia. And he thought that was all just terrible. Aren't you interested in all these good jobs,
relatively good jobs, suddenly in the South? A lot of people there were probably poor, now they're not poor because of this movement. Well, that was a little hard for him to answer. But anyway, it was partly that he was still thinking in these area terms. If you think in national terms, these things aren't quite the same. (    ) I guess I thought in general that this was progress, and I guess I still had perhaps more confidence than everyone else as to what the federal government can do. (    ) stick to a purpose (    ) So we saw, in talking about these early poverty efforts, that a lot of it would involve national standards, national minimums, for health and education, over social welfare programs. Cash benefits and other benefits, you would establish a national minimum. I remember arguing that this was the main difference between poverty in the United States and poverty, say, in England or in France or in Sweden. In those countries for a long time many of these programs were the responsibility of the central government. And they don't know anything about this, of having depressed schools, low budget schools. In France, they're all the same, national schools, centralized (    ). At least this would solve this national minimum problem. The same thing is true in Sweden. But that's partly just a matter of structure. This was where economist got, talking about political scientists, the problems, but it was a review, and in Michael Harrington's view of saying that we had turned our minds away from this issue. We thought that we solved a lot in the New Deal, but we had some things we missed. And these things might even require a new and stronger emphasis of the federal government. Establish this (    )

RK: It seems to me that was one of the roles or one of the jobs that social scientists, particularly in a place like the Institute, were helping to determine what these national standards were, maybe how they should be adjusted from time to time. There were some regional adjustments made, which is, you know, a notion that comes out of the '30s to, but its applied less, I think, in the '60s because there is more of a national labor market. We've kind of gotten away from some of the divisions of the '30s. Do you think that's true?

RL: Yeah. (    ) we have people studying things like legal services, lawyers. Some of the best people in the Institute here have law school backgrounds, working on educational opportunities, various state and federal court cases. We have people working on the Fourteenth Amendment as it applies to AFDC and all kinds of interesting cases and interesting poverty law, issues and developments. We've had relatively little (    ) but I think probably poverty thinking had something to do with movements in national goals in health, national minimums in health. It's been a long time coming, a long, slow direction.

RK: The Institute became one of the really central places where a lot of this thinking was going on, it seems to me.

RL: I think that would be the best argument. That's a strong over statement perhaps [laughter], because we never had true believers from all sides here. There were strong views that we didn't represent, I mean, we didn't hear. (    )
because they didn't come here. Sol Alinsky wasn't about to come here and spend a year. [Laughter] We did, however, occasionally have people from Sweden here (. ). They thought we were a pretty dumb bunch of people [laughter], because they'd solved all these problems (. ). Then we had people from different disciplines, as I mentioned. We'd go to great length to make sure that we had every group represented. We've had relatively little about housing, about health. (. ) stuff but more in education. Lots about training and retraining. Then of course, we got into the cash benefits now. That led us off into this negative income tax. That became the biggest half or biggest three quarters of Institute time and effort.

RK: And that's really the logical extension or kind of working out of this economic argument. What the poor, as one of my colleagues at Duke says, need is money not a lot of social programs. If you can find some ways to do that, then they can figure out how to solve their own problems, perhaps.

RL: Well, that's a prediction (. ).

RK: [Laughter] Yeah.

RL: So the history of the Institute has to give a large attention to that, '68 or '67 to at least 1973. That became an obsession of this place. We were the center of that in a way, academic center of that effort. And that was a learning experience in many ways. For one thing, it was a learning experience with inner disciplinary efforts. We did, effectively, have a really going concern, involving lawyers, socialists, psychologists, education experts, and so on, and tax experts. That was a high point in lots of ways for me and other people I know. I worked on the tax side particularly. We had a great tax lawyer here, the poverty law expert, Joel Handler. Marmers from political science. (. ) we had an unusual collection of people, and we had great econometricians, Harold Watts. Called in great consultants like Jim Tolber (. ) Morgan. So it was really first class, and a ground breaking sort of experience. Now, it never got anywhere in a sense. The political effort was a colossal failure. On the other hand, you can say we got a lot of small negative income taxes adopted somehow or other, like the food stamp program, different income tax credits.

RK: Yeah, there are lots of bits and pieces.

RL: You add those up (. ), and many of them are federal government programs, bypassing states. So it feeds a lot of money to the very lowest income areas, as well (. ). That was part of the story of the Institute and involved discipline relationships to one another in different ways at different times. But there are some things that we never got around to. Not yet, any way [laughter], and it's been twenty-five years. Things haven't moved very far. We thought at various times of changing the name or changing the mission of the Institute, but we always get restrained in that. Some people say we haven't done enough about race, haven't done enough about the problem of racial discrimination and racial preparation. We thought sometimes about just especially studying women's problems. Moving in that direction. Moving to some broader title that would involve a broader range of problems, social
problems more problems. It would just be social problems ( ).
Well, I think that we're not about to do that. I say we, I'm no
longer really involved, but as an observer.

RK: The thing that I've started to observe, and I think a
couple of people have told me this too, that one impact that this
had, or a place like this, or all the things that were going on
in social sciences in the '60s, the study of poverty and the
causes of poverty were really the kind of central concern for,
say, graduate students and a lot of economists in the '60s. If
you go back and look at graduate students who were trained in
economics in the '60s, whatever they ended up doing, whatever
their particular fields were, a lot of them were very much
focused on dealing with these very specific problems that you
were talking about. It was the thing that everybody was putting
their energy and their intellect into. Was that true here, too?

RL: Yes, it was. And it's interesting that it wasn't just
the left-wingers. (        )

RK: Late neoclassical, yeah.

RL: It was a chance to use their micro-economic theories
and their econometric skills, and there were big data bases
around. So a lot of people came in without any great social
mission. This was just a problem and a way of analysis that
cought their attention. And their professors would say, "Sure,
you can do this." And some ideas just invaded the profession. I
remember looking one time here--negative income tax was at its
height of popularity--we have various fields within economics.
And in about four fields, the preliminary exam questions for the
Phd were on the [laughter] negative income tax. It used micro
economics, public finance, labor economics, econometrics. If you
learned a lot about the negative income tax, you were in good
shape. [Laughter] So that was kind of a joke about this, but it
represented something in the way of an "in" thing, as you say, an
"in" approach to something, or some way of looking at social
problems, or individual behavior in response to a problem.

RK: People went off in different directions with that.
Some did become very committed socially and politically and
others more just professionally, but it was a very dynamic
period, I think, in the history of the economics profession or in
social sciences in this country.

RL: Yeah, to some extent it was inter-disciplinary. A lot
of these private think-tanks, these consultant, for-money groups
like The Associates or Mathematica. A lot of our students have
helped fill up those places. A lot of those think-tanks will
take a problem of any sort, on international trade or racial
discrimination or (        ). They're hired guns, but some of
these people got their start with this Poverty Institute. (        )
There is a big fraternity of people who started at one place or
another, and still talk about this. There are other centers. I
mean, Wisconsin is by no means unique. Like there's this new
group at Harvard, inside the Kennedy School of what's called
Social Problems Center, or something like that. Special funding
and (        ) at Michigan. None of them call themselves
Poverty Institute but they're very close.

RK: Focus on the same kind of stuff.
RL: The Urban Institute has a sort of overlap with people here, Brookings.
RK: Urban problems, I know, were the focus of most of the work that was done here, and most of the work the people were doing on poverty, particularly after '65 or so. Initially, there's a lot of interest in Appalachia and the Delta, you know, the problems of the South. But quickly the urban problems became really foremost in people's minds. What did you think about the state of the rural South? I'm just interested if it was just a matter of spill over in terms of the way this research and thinking affected antipoverty programs in the South, or whether there was some specific thought--well, our city problems are the result of our failure to deal with, particularly, the problems of race and poverty in the South. Is there any thinking about that?
RL: Yeah, a lot of thinking I would say. (     ) tradition of concern about race and about poverty and about national development. (     ) confront this issue, regional disparities. Takes you right back to the century. So that was there all the time. I think you could say that having a southerner in the White House had something to do with all this. I'm sorry to stumble around.
RK: No, that's all right. This is exactly what (     ).
RL: In the Kennedy period, there was a brief, roughly a year's time, when it was just talked back and forth about what would be the campaign slogans or goals in the campaign for reelection. Poverty was put forward, along with the argument that you couldn't say we were going to do things for black people, and you couldn't say we were going to do it for the black slums of Chicago or for the black under class in the Delta. But you could reach these people by a national program without the color going with it. Well, that touched something, somewhere. Is that responsive to what you asked?
RK: Yeah, exactly.
RL: Now, Kennedy, all the time he was there, that three years in the White House, being besieged by complaints that he wasn't moving on housing. He wasn't moving on rights to vote. He wasn't doing a lot of things, and he always had his reasons. We'd get in arguments (       ). But there were a whole group of his advisors and people around him and groups that he heard from that (     ) wanted to do something else. And he couldn't just give tax cuts to the rich, and he couldn't just do the various things that he was doing. Actually, he was a very cautious guy. So when Johnson came in, he didn't have that same set of caution. He had, on the other hand, a very real commitment to go ahead from the New Deal to the next stages, and he thought this kind of stuff was somewhere there. (     ) the things that Kennedy had just kind of tiptoed around, like federal aid to education and (     ), and he did, of course. And that was all part of this same business, overriding the regional. . . .
END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A
RL: I guess I had thought you could only get attention to (   ) like that for some length or period of time. There are other things that come along, and that was foreseeable. I didn't know what those things would be, but we'd had big discussions in the Executive Office about what kind of problems were there that people were interested in and concerned about. One of them was what was at that time called conservation. That's environment problems. Another one was consumer safety. (   ) drugs and food and automobile tires [laughter]. Those were things that you sensed there was some great national feeling about, and there could be other things. And certainly since then we've had a number of these things that are rivalrous, at least, with poverty. Again, where there's a great surge of interest. The environment is the best example. Just catches the interest of all kinds of people, old and young, conservative and liberal, and so on, all across the way. That kind of overrides race or religion or education or something else. Problems with goals attached. So I guess I thought that we would, by 1980, at least, we would have worn this out. And some other president would come along and incorporate maybe the poverty idea along with something else. And that you would have that way, as we've had in the past, a movement around a set of related problems. I never really believed, at all, that we would have an Institute that would last twenty-five years under different presidents and different administrations, different Congresses, and so on. And that we would still think of poverty as a big problem. That was optimistic [laughter].

RL: In those days, that's the way people were thinking.

RL: Catch an optimist, good wave. [Laughter] It looks ridiculous in retrospect how we could be so wrong. So that's just a kind of footnote to what we were talking earlier about. What kind of thought there was involved and what kind of controversy. Other people were thinking about these things. The Poverty Institute has held several ten year retrospectives. There's one coming up in May here. (   ) There was one at Williamsburg, and one at Wingspread.

RL: The one at Wingspread, I've got a copy of the papers.

RL: Now, those are of some interest. I'm not sure they're broad enough for what you're reaching for, but they do confront the question, what works? What doesn't work? What failed?

RL: And some of the authors of those retrospectives are very (   ) people for you to think about. On the Institute side of things, some of the best thinkers and liveliest and most interesting developers at this moment are researchers of the Institute. And one I would put right at the top of the list to think about is Shelton Danziger, who's now at Michigan. He's the organizer of this 25th. Did you say you had that material about it?

RL: You can pick it up downstairs, but it's called Poverty and Public Policy, What Do We Know? What Should We Do? We have
a sociologist as director now, Bud Howser, and (        ) a list of names (       ).

RK: Okay. Well, I'll get a copy of that when I go down.

RL: The woman in charge of all the arrangements and so on was Betty Evans.

RK: Yeah, she's who I'm going to talk to to get some material.

RL: She's a great resource. Anyway, this, I think, sort of indicates that there is a continuing community of some sorts. There is a National Advisory Council that's for the Institute, and they include people like Christopher Jenks. I noticed you have his book just now.

RK: Yeah, I just got it. My student's reading it right now.

RL: Alfred Cohn is on that. I don't know if we've got any southerners on there.

RK: That's what I was looking. I don't see any so far.

RL: Got some right wingers.

RK: This guy used to be at Duke.

RL: And it is interdisciplinary. Franklin Wilson from Chicago.

RK: Right. Roger Wilkins writes a lot about the South.

RL: What's he a professor of.

RK: History, I think.

RL: Yeah, we've always had some historians on this board. Jim Patterson from Brown is one. Oh, I know, a guy, you probably know him, a historian who was at Virginia. He left without tenure and he went to the Kennedy Library in Boston. He wrote the best little history of the roots of the poverty program in the Johnson years. It was in the American Historical Review as an article.

RK: Oh yeah, I've got that. I can't remember what the guy's name is either. I've read that.

RL: He was going to do a full scale history of the War on Poverty up to some period. But I think he's very good.

RK: The people who did Eyes on the Prize are doing a three part series on the War on Poverty.

RL: Television series. I attended a meeting about that several years ago. I was sort of shocked by the way they go about doing it. [Laughter] They just wanted to know where the confrontations were. They've got the footage. So they kept talking about the film archives and I didn't know what they were talking about.

RK: [Laughter]

RL: That's all these little T.V. stations everywhere in the country, and film from wherever there were demonstrations or lock-ins or lock-outs. So I thought that was a curious kind of, and it's very much (       ) black poor, I think. That was there (       ), I think. Community action was their. . . .

RK: That's probably what they'll focus on.

RL: I had a hard time (       ).

RK: I've talked to them a little bit. I want to go up and spend a little bit more time with them. I'm really trying not to do that with what we're doing. I want all of those pieces there,
but one of the things we're trying to do is develop a little bit bigger picture of it. I think unless we do that, unless we try
to deal with this as kind of intellectual historians, social historians, political historians, I don't think that we're going
to have much to say about what we've learned, where we should be going, what new programs, what new research we need to do, to
begin, at least, thinking about how we might need to rethink some of these problems, reconceptualize them, develop some new
strategies.

RL: A lot of historical, intellectual history stuff about
black leaders ( ), not just Martin Luther King, but others.
RK: Malcom X?
RL: Malcom X and so on. Reconsidering.
RK: Well, it's an interesting period. I think in the
historical profession that the kind of reunderstanding of the post-
war period is going to be kind of hot emphasis, an important
one, because I don't think we understand, in the ways that we
need to do, what has happened. The end of the cold war is really
going to force now. We don't have that kind of easy dichotomy
that we used to have of thinking about the world, and thinking
about the nation. We're going to have to rethink what we've been
up to. ( )

RL: ( ) The other day when I was reading about this
most recent stuff about the FBI. I guess it's in the Atlantic
Monthly this time ( ). What was Watergate really about? And
the allegation by the author ( ) was the whole thing had to
do with the conflict between the FBI and the presidents, whoever they were. They'd reached the end of some point. That their
method, when the president was not doing what they wanted him to
do, was to go to the press. And that's where Deep Throat comes
from. Deep Throat was the FBI, and this was their squawk for the
president. So we've broken open all those records, presumably,
and a lot of the stuff involves things like the FBI and the CIA.
What did we learn out of all that? [Laughter] So there's some
kind of new realm of evidence for historians.
RK: Oh, absolutely.
RL: I mean, it's just like in Russia, opening up all the
documents. You know Stan Cutler from here?
RK: I know who he is, but I don't know him.
RL: I think he's working on those things. That's been one
of his big interests all along.
RK: Yeah, he's been very important in getting that kind of
stuff open. A couple of friends of mine, who are Soviet
historians, have been over there, and things, two years ago, they
might get one little document after a week of hounding them.
Now, they just go in and boxes and boxes. They're microfilming
the stuff so fast.
RL: Do you know this sort of radical group of historians,
( ), but the leader is ( )?
RK: I know who she is, yeah.
RL: From Harvard.
RK: She's a sociologist.
RL: Well, she's done a lot of historical kinds of stuff on
social security programs and things. One of the best things I
remember that she wrote was about the Civil War Pension Program, which is a remarkable story. So these are very valuable things that historians can do, I think, to go back and apply some of the methodology, if you will, [laughter], or the present controversies relating them to much earlier times. So we are, at least intellectually, in a different mood. The War on Poverty represented a different mood, a different kind of idea about what government might do, or some kind of a new effort on the part of some class of people, intellectuals or whatever, leaders, the private sector as well. (     ) I hadn't sensed that, you know, that the poverty line is going to be so interesting (     ) institutions like the FBI. What would we do without an FBI? [Laughter] What would we do with a different method of reporting on intelligence matters? What do we do about Savings and Loan Associations? All kinds of problems. We haven't thought much or had real argument.

RK: Right. The military is going to be a big one. We haven't even started to conceptualize what a defense program is going to look like in this new world. What kind of money we're going to spend on it, or ways from that, I think?

RL: I have a sort of little hobby of things that have to do with, I guess I think of them as government failures. We talk about market failures, I'm talking about government failures. One I think of as an example, and I think there are other examples, and to take some failures and study them, why did they happen? One has to do with this whole business of a Social Security Trust Fund. (     ) one of the glorious failures had to do with the predictions following the 1978 (     ). It had to with recalculating benefits, and an error was made in the formula. We discovered the error. It took six years for Congress to correct the error, and that meant an unwanted, unplanned transfer to one particular age group of retired people. (     ) I thought that some student could take that and study who made the error. It's like a (     ) with submarine or developing a submarine or the Stealth Bomber. [Laughter] Absolute error. Who was responsible for that, and why did it take so long to correct it? That's one. The other one also has to do with the Social Security Trust Fund, and I regard this as a kind of government failure. We adopted a position on the Trust Fund. It's supposed to grow until 2030. Then we draw down. We're going to build it to 12 trillion dollars, which is a couple of times the present GNP. It's an enormous program. And the error that I want somebody to work on is that it was never debated. There's no debate in either floor of the Congress or housses of the. There's no presidential argument. There's nobody telling the public that that's what we're going to do. It just emerges gradually. Now, Moynihan and some other people, once and a while, say something about whether we should do that. Moynihan himself was involved in this dark of night meeting with Senator Doyle and some other people who were members of the Greenspan Commission (     ). I regard that as a great government failure. But as I understand it, they reached an agreement to start with that the Greenspan Commission was not going to concern itself with the size of the Trust Fund. They agreed to accept
whatever, that was beyond them. So who is it up to. It's up to some other group. It's avoided. There's not been a real public debate of a responsible or political way of doing things. So I've urged a couple of students and say there's a great story for economists or somebody. Now, one book that was written about the whole Greenspan Commission and that's by a guy named Light, but he closes it off and doesn't touch that. The argument, the whole thing was over, and it hadn't been mentioned. So he doesn't mention it. Well, that's a failure on his part. But I can see why he might have just said, "Well, I have gone far enough." Well, somebody could break open those records of the Greenspan Commission, I think, or the meetings of the House Ways and Means Committee. [Laughter]

RK: Talk to people too.
RL: Somewhere, and talk to people.
RK: Well, it's an interesting way of teaching those things, of looking at those things that didn't work. And I think that's like in this project that we're doing, there are a couple of cases where we very specifically have targeted individuals and organizations who had a great idea but just went bust. Trying to look at where the failure came from. Was it ill conceived? Was it poor leadership, misunderstanding political realities or what was it that didn't make this work the way it should have? It's a good way to teach, a good way to learn.

RL: Oh, I agree. Of course, it affects students, they study failures, the wrong way but (               )
RK: Well, I guess you learn more about history and about affecting change by looking at things because when you look at successes, you think they had to happen. You think that they were kind of preconceived, where you don't realize all the contingencies. And when you look at failure, you realize, God, if that one little thing had been changed just a little bit, this whole thing would have worked.

RL: Like studying the Vietnam War. There's a great failure.
RK: Yeah.
RL: Maybe somebody we won't think about it as such a great failure, but yeah.
RK: Well, I really appreciated talking to you. This has been helpful.
END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B
END OF INTERVIEW